

## TRANSOM FEATURE – FORMOSA 550 RUNABOUT



# One tough Aussie

*With an emphasis on doing the job rather than looking the part, Formosa's 550 Runabout is an ideal platform for the hobby angler.*

*Test by Shaun Moloney, Photos by Nigel Paterson*

**REGARDLESS** of whether you like your fishing inside or outside, or a day on the lake towing the kids around, the Formosa 550 is a roomy and capable boat which concentrates on the basics rather than loads of extras which cost a bomb.

Formosa Marine is an Australian based company, manufacturing a broad range of quality and versatile plate aluminium trailer boats. There are seven different models, from rugged tiller steers to roomy half cabin models, with the Runabout series of boats in the Formosa

range available in four sizes starting from the 460RA (Runabout) up to the largest being the 550 RA.

One of the particular features regarding the entire range is the fact that every boat is constructed with a four millimetre thick bottom to the hull and three millimetre sides. This may seem a little extreme on some of the smaller boats but it shows that no matter what hull you are in favour of, the quality of construction is not compromised just because the boat's size is reduced. Keeping with the construction theme,

a number of details below the floor further add to the overall strength and build quality of the boat which include internal transom welds, reinforced floor structure and longitudinal structures across the hull.

Looking externally at the 550 Runabout, one of the first things you noticed is the amount of free board which the boat has, indicating that it's not only built for smooth water conditions, but can also handle a swell without worrying about catching one over the side or transom. This will be

more than appealing to the angler as they are the ones who will at times be glad to have the extra hull depth especially in a following sea or cracking a bar crossing on a choppy day with a run out tide. Further adding to the seaworthy abilities of the 550, the boat has quite a deep vee which cuts through the chop with absolute ease, but is also very stable while doing so thanks to the large welded chines, a deadrise of 15 degrees and the beam which on this boat is a very broad 2.40 metres. I drove the 550 RA in a stiff 20 knot breeze with plenty of chop and white caps all over the place and apart from copping some spray when travelling across the chop, the boat remained stable and steered precisely where you pointed it.

The cockpit is placed relatively



# One tough Aussie

## SPECIFICATIONS:

**BOAT NAME: FORMOSA 550 RA**

**LOA: 5.65 METRES**

**BEAM: 2.40 METRES**

**DRAFT: APPROX 1.0 METRE**

**WEIGHT: 540 KG W/O MOTOR**

**FUEL: 70 Litres**

**ENGINE: 140HP (MAX)**

**HULL: 3MM SIDE, 4MM BOTTOM**

**PASSENGERS: 7 (MAX)**

**PRICE: \$37,140**

TEST BOAT PROVIDED BY TOMO'S  
MARINE, 02 4945 3202  
WWW.TOMOSMARINE.COM.AU



forward in the boat which to some may look a little different, however this allows easy access to the anchor well and bow sprit via the split screen with centre opening section. The boat looks relatively spartan inside, as it doesn't have a lot of bells, whistles or shiny bits which increase the overall look of the interior design, but what the Formosa 550 offers is a roomy interior that is functional where every bit of floor space is completely usable and is relatively maintenance free. Twin swivel seats provide comfy seating for the driver and passenger and are well suited to the runabout design. A basic cockpit and wheel provide the necessary instrumentation for the driver, with the dash being capable of additional electronics as required, while a glovebox in front of the passenger allows the basic essentials to be stored or locked out of the way. A full rear folding bench seat offers ample seating for three adults and although it certainly cannot be described as a lounge, it offers basic seating none the less and is suitable for the average run around your local lake or bay. Designated seating capacity is listed for a maximum seven persons but there's only really seating available for the average sized family. Any more and you're standing. On the flip side though the rear folding lounge is ideal for the anglers as it can virtually be folded flush with the transom further increasing floor space and makes landing the big fish that much easier. If rear seating is not a high priority, then you can opt for a three quarter rear seat with a transom door, which might just be the ticket for the serious or offshore angler.

Continuing with the angling theme, the 550 has two aft rod holders as standard, however with the addition of the bait board with plumbed live bait tank, a further four rod holders are added to the equation within the fitted unit, generally negating the need for cutting further rod holders into the gunwales. Quite lengthy side pockets adorn each side of the boat which give a moderate

amount of storage for smaller or less bulky items such as towels, small tackle boxes, hand lines or a first aid kit. A larger stowage area for life jackets, wet weather gear or bulkier items is found in the forward compartment in front of the foot wells. With the rear lounge in the seated position, stowage is available under the seat and extends into the transom area.

Grab rails on either side of the transom provide access to and from the boat from the rear, with the port side rail also having a small integrated step making the transition even easier and is only a little extra cost in the overall scheme of things. If swimming or if water activities are going to be a regular feature then the folding transom ladder will see plenty of use and is a factory feature on the 550.

Keeping the Formosa 550 on the plane is a 90 horsepower Mercury Optimax, which provides plenty of punch with economy to match. The surprising thing regarding the 550 is that the maximum horsepower rating is a whopping 140 horses. I found that 90 horsepower felt completely adequate with acceleration and general running or cruising speeds, and is responsive when the throttle is opened with the boat reaching the plane in no time flat. At slow speeds, it ticks along quietly without hesitation let alone any hint that it's a two-stroke motor due to its quiet operation. At wide open throttle with two adults on board the boat cracked along nicely and unless you consistently filled the boat with people and gear, I couldn't see any real need to go anywhere near the maximum horsepower rating.

The Formosa 550 is an ideal family runabout, which will certainly appeal to the angler, especially with options that can be tailored to suit fishing. The overall interior may not be quite as flashy as some other makes on the market but the Formosa 550 is more of a work horse than a show pony. It will do everything you want in a runabout to keep the family happy but will also keep the angler and their mates happy on a blue water outing. For its size the boat is also very well priced coming in as tested for a tickle over \$37,000. At this price Formosa is sure to make more than idle chit chat at the ramp.



## TOMO'S MARINE

*Better Service*

Phone: (02) 4945 3202 – [www.tomosmarine.com.au](http://www.tomosmarine.com.au)

Email: [tomosmarine@hotmail.com](mailto:tomosmarine@hotmail.com)

96 Marks Point Rd, Marks Point NSW 2280

